3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

including the individuals killed, was told to the chief. If the dream was favourable, confirmation was sought. The chief took his zebra tail of office, poured oil into it, and hung it up in the house of his chief wife. If during the night it exuded cattle dung and blood, the sign was good; if blood only, it was bad. Blood indicated the death of men, but that was of secondary importance if the dung was there which indicated spoil in cattle as the result of victory. Along with the tail was hung up the chief's spear, which now gleamed and glittered like fire in the night, while the tail moved about with a swishing sound, indicating that the spirits urged battle. All this took place in the presence of the chief and the principal medicine man only; and their report was published in the morning, when the blowing of a horn summoned all males to the meeting-place. "My children," says the chief, "we are hungry. Let us eat the cattle of so and so." But he gives the name, not of the real point of attack, but of some other chief living in another direction; for there was always the possibility of traitors in the community, who would carry warning to the enemy.

A wild scene of hurry followed. Spears were collected and sharpened, defects attended to, new hafts attached. The shields were examined and strengthened if necessary. If there was a blacksmith in the village he was besieged by warriors whose weapons had become rusty or useless, all eager to equip themselves for the spoil. But man and weapon are alike useless until they have been given power and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

726 789 protection by the medicine man; and the armed warriors, standing in rows or circles, were sprinkled with medicine from a huge pot, rendering them and their weapons irresistible. In the rising of 1906 in the Songea area, it is said that the fighting men were so confident of the power of the drugs that they rushed up to the mouths of the German guns, only to perish there by the bullets which they believed would be turned into water.

Beside the publicly administered medicine, a more powerful drug was to be had for a fee; and the chief himself was armed and protected at all points in this way. One medicine ensured that his spear would find the heart of an enemy; another that the enemy's spear would fall short; a third he chewed as the fight went on; and a few very great chiefs possess a medicine which enables them to remove a fatal wound to a non-fatal spot. Those who could obtain it attached another medicine to the spear handle, and some carried a charm on their shields.

726 714 Fighting men carried spears numbering from six up to twenty; and the greater the number the bolder the hero, for a large number of spears indicated a determination not to run until every weapon available had been thrown at the enemy, or otherwise [567] disposed of. Great heroes were followed by slaves who carried additional supplies of weapons. Some had wide shields of ox-hide, and others had narrow strips strengthened by slim bamboos. On their heads they wore the *ikipubili*, a plume of red and black feathers, the capture of which from an enemy was

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

the great ambition of every warrior. Arms, legs, and waist were partially covered by strips of hide with the hair attached, but these were meant to give a wild appearance, not to protect the body.

No man went out to battle with an unsettled quarrel hanging over him; the ancestors of the other party to the quarrel would see to it that he did not return. And the chief must be free from offence. One who proposed to go to war with other men's wives on his conscience, was sternly told by his councillors that his conduct made victory impossible, and he must make such amends as the law demanded. Except in cases of hurried attacks, such as the march of Munsoso to avenge an insult, all household fires were extinguished, and new fire obtained by rubbing. The women threw away their old bark-cloths, and used new ones. Just before setting out the chief went to the house of his first wife and prayed to his ancestors to grant him success. The war dance which followed the sprinkling with medicine might last for two or three days, and finally, armed and protected by weapons, medicines, prayers, and a good conscience, the warriors went forth.

The fighting began when the opposing forces came within a spear's throw of each other. Here and there a great hero stood out to hurl insulting language at the enemy, challenging them to "come on," and be scattered by his single arm. When the fighting became close, stabbing took the place of throwing, and if a very few were killed on either side, the losing side retired. But only for a short distance; for a

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

726 hero stood out, and called the others to rally round him, and a few desperate men would drive back the enemy. And so the battle swayed to and fro, until one chief considered that his men had had enough, and made his submission; or perhaps the fight was renewed next day when the tired men had rested. But so long as the chief went on blowing his *isiba* (usually a small horn), the battle went on. The great war horn was blown continuously, and the *ililonge*, a bamboo whistle with a penetrating note, made itself heard above the din.

Behind the fighting-line were the old men, one of whom held the *lusero*, a basket with a great selection of powerful medicines, very sacred, and of vital importance. If it was taken by the enemy, it was hoisted up for all to see, and if it was finally held by them, the dynasty to which it originally belonged died out. It was shaken by the old man who held it, and was carried forward or drawn back, according as the enemy retired or advanced. If the chief was an old man he did not enter the battle, but took his place in the rear, praying; if he was defending his home, he prayed to God and to the spirits; if he was the aggressor, he left out the prayer to the Deity!

722 After the men went out to fight, the women sat silent and unwashed in the villages until they returned, carefully avoiding quarrels, which would kill the husbands of the participants. They were stripped quite naked, "to give lightness of foot" in case the enemy forced an entrance. Women were never killed

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

roll of the Great War was a terrifying revelation of the unyielding nature of the Europeans in a quarrel.

Individual chiefs had special methods of securing victory. Mwamakula's wife, when her husband marched out with his forces, sat on a live sheep as long as the fighting went on: so assuring good luck to her husband in taking cattle, and preventing them running away when taken. Another wife sat on a cooking pot, to keep the enemy in a state of security while the warriors were closing in on them. They would go about as usual, unaware of danger, cooking and eating, until the storm burst, and there was no hope of defence. His sister had a *lusero* similar to the one carried into battle; and one of his old men lay down on the path, each soldier stepping over him as he passed on. While the fight was being waged, this old man sat on his haunches and pulled himself forward in that position, the effect being to make the enemy run. The *lusero* was carried hereditarily by Mfwimi, and when he laid it down it moved forward of itself as the enemy retired.

In the north there was a great prophet, whose presence in the battle always assured the victory to his own side; but if he retired, even for a moment, the battle turned, and he was brought back, by force if necessary.

Two great wars still stand out in the minds of the people: the victorious march of the Angoni, and the slaving invasion of the so-called Arabs. Both these enemies brought with them methods of fighting unknown to the Konde, who fled before the Angoni,

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

721 driving cattle and carrying what they could carry: men and women flying naked for greater swiftness: until the great Sango chief Merere, who is said to have had three hundred guns, inflicted a severe defeat on the invaders. After that the Konde made a few feeble attempts to stand, but they came to nothing, and the Angoni passed like a scourge through the land. Against the Arabs a better fight was made, but it was with the help of the white men who at that time began to enter the Konde country.

The Konde were and are a timid people. The terror of the Arabs has passed, but the fear of the Angoni is probably a present fact. In August, 1914, some of the leading men at Karonga came to me. "All you white men," they said, "will be summoned to fight in your own country, and we shall be left without protection from the Angoni." I tried to reassure them, but without success. "No," they said, "three days after you go they will be upon us, and take away all our cattle as they did before." Possibly a more courageous spirit now obtains. A band of Angoni were enlisted for special work at Karonga in the early months of the war, and showed themselves so averse from anything like danger, that the reputation of the whole tribe, quite undeservedly, went down to zero. "The fear of the Angoni," said some Konde to me at that time, "is gone. If they were to come upon us now, we would fight them." But it may be doubted whether any but a few have really lost their old fears.

726 The Konde were never organized for war, and there was no military caste. Everything connected with

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

726 war was haphazard, or nearly so. Mostly a sudden rush to arms of untrained and unprepared men, with not even, in the less important cases, a declaration of war; though in the more important outbreaks a broken spear was sent as a token of hostility. This was the first intimation the Germans had in 1897 that the lake-shore chiefs were determined to fight. Such training as the men had was gained in the open-air sports of the cattle-tending stage; running (a very important accomplishment for a Konde warrior), leaping, spear throwing and stabbing. The only idea of formation was the straight, or rather straggling, line; the only conception of strategy was the sudden night or early morning attack. The man best prepared for battle was the man who had the greatest variety of medicines in or on him; nor can there be any doubt that these protective drugs and charms gave a sense of security which in turn generated a very real courage. Like so many other Bantu tribes, the Konde are a pastoral and agricultural community, so untrained in the arts of war that they did not even have stockades for protection, so common among most of their neighbours. The idea of a standing organization for defence or attack did not rise above their mental horizon, and when war came a wild rush to arms was their only resort.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

the senior territorial nobles of the plain, and they told their juniors. A sacrifice was made in one of the sacred groves of the Kyungus and all fires in the whole Ngonde plain were put out. And then "all the chiefs from every country near Mbande and the nobles and all the great-commoners and all the ordinary men and the women too went to Kyimbwe." At Kyimbwe, which is a cross-roads in the bush, they threw away the ashes of their old fires; while those few people who could not get to Kyimbwe threw them away near their own houses on the same day as the others. At Kyimbwe new fire was made with fire-sticks by the nobles of Ngonde and distributed to the whole plain in order. Great chiefs and senior nobles took it first and passed it to their juniors, chiefs passed to great-commoners, and in each group the common people got it from their own ruling noble or their own great-commoner.

And then, later in the year when the first maize and the first pumpkin leaves were ready to eat, an elaborate first-fruit ceremony was carried out. The first-fruits were offered by the nobles of Ngonde in the grove of the previous Kyungu, the one who had last died. "Then the great chiefs would do so next—Kalonga, Mwakasungula, Mwembelo, Katamba and the chiefs of Ngana also, each in his own sacred grove (i.e. at the grave of his own predecessor in the title). . . . . And then after them everyone, both chiefs and people, each at his father's grave. All offered first-fruits to their own spirits. And finally they would eat themselves, each with his chief wife. But beforehand they would not eat for fear of angering the spirits."

These two rituals concerned the plain alone; the nobles and chiefs of the hills are said to have had similar rituals of their own but they were not synchronized with or dependent upon those of the plain.

In time of tribal war also the Kyungu and the nobles of Ngonde led the people in prayer. All chiefs and nobles were summoned from the plain and the great ones entered the Kyungu's house to receive their instructions: "When he had finished speaking he would tell them to go to pray. So they would leave his house and gather all together, all chiefs and men, and pray. The premier noble of Ngonde would begin, asking each of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn to bless them in the fight. And then the great chiefs would pray after them" (each addressing his own predecessors in his title). The territorial nobles did not pray, for it was the royal family alone whose spirits were then addressed. Here again it was the plain alone that was concerned.

Now this organization of religious ritual in the Ngonde plain was both a factor of and itself determined by the general political

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

even here it was rather position than area that was at stake : " We object to their proximity, let them move further off," said the chiefs of Ngelenge.

Civil wars varied in size and importance from little local fights between neighbouring villages, fiefs or chiefdoms to more extensive fights between groups or even whole houses of chiefs. And in every case the political organization took on, for the time, a military character. Great-commoners led their villagers to war, chiefs their great-commoners ; the senior of a group of brother chiefs summoned his juniors to help him, while a great chief summoned all the local chiefs of his house. But only the Kyungu himself could summon the territorial nobles.

Now leadership in war is a factor of political authority ; the great chiefs, nobles, chiefs and great-commoners derived part of their status from their military functions. But, on the other hand, it is equally true to say that it was the other factors of their status which enabled them to exercise this military authority.

In every war, for instance, there were religious elements. Chiefs had war medicines and prayed to their ancestors for success ; while the loyalty of the great-commoners and people to their chief had both a spiritual and an economic importance. Sometimes, in peace, the leading commoners would dream of war and, if they dreamt of running away, then their chief would hastily kill meat for them. Such dreams were witchcraft and, unless promptly dealt with by a feast, were held to be a certain harbinger of future defeat.

" In civil warfare the Kyungu never took any part at all, he remained impartial at Mbande. His sons fought one another by themselves." (But what of the war, between Ngelenge and Ngana, did he not help his own sons in any way?) " No, he did not. For both ' the cousins ' and ' the sons ' alike were his children, he was the father of all."

(b) *TRIBAL WAR.*

The procedure of tribal warfare and that of the occasional punitive expeditions against the Kyungu's subordinates was the same. Messages were sent by the *valukuta* to all chiefs and nobles of the plain to come to Mbande. There the more important of them entered the Kyungu's house and were given their orders by him personally : " And then, when the Kyungu had told them whom to go and fight, he would finish up by saying ' That is all then, go away now and call down blessings on your arms.' So they would leave his house and gather all together, chiefs and their men, and pray."

The premier noble of Ngonde would begin, reciting all the names of the sacred groves of the Kyungu and asking each one to bless them in their fight. Then after him each great chief in turn would pray in like

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

726 manner to his own predecessors in his title. The territorial nobles, however, did not then pray to theirs, although they went to fight; tribal war was carried on under royal auspices alone. The Kyungu himself remained behind in his house praying for their success. Some of the nobles of Ngonde went with the expedition, carrying the magic war-tails of the Kyungu, his spear *Kamisa* and a magic horn.

721 The territorial nobles of the hills, we were told, were not summoned to take part in tribal wars or punitive expeditions. And this fact is perhaps the clearest evidence of the relatively slight hold which Mbande had upon them. Nor, even in the plain, were the Kyungu's orders invariably obeyed without question. It is said that when Mujombe appealed for help against the Bemba chief Kyepele (=Cepela) Kyungu Mwangonde at first ordered the chiefs of Ngana to go alone to the war, without Mwakasungula. For Mwakasungula was his only surviving adult son and he feared to lose him. But the chiefs of Ngana refused to start without Mwakasungula, who in the end went with them.

726 The same warning that preceded a civil war was given by the men of Ngonde in tribal warfare also. "When the Kyungu sent his people against strangers he always forbade any surprise attacks, let there be parley first and explanation; let them point out that they had no wish for war, that it was the others who had forced war on them by wantonly killing one of their men (or whatever the reason was). We never fought like the Ngoni, always we explained our case first, asking why, if the other side had any just cause for their actions, they had not refrained and come and talked it all over with us. And so it was in the war against Kyepele, we explained our case."

727 567 We have seen already that the booty of punitive expeditions was divided among the chiefs and nobles who had fought and the Kyungu, and so it was in tribal warfare also. War was an important source of revenue for Mbande, bringing in both cattle and slaves. The war against the Bemba Kyepele (=Cepela) is particularly remembered for the number of slaves which Mwakasungula and the other chiefs brought back from it. While discussing slavery with some men of Ngonde one of us remarked that there had been little or no slavery among the Nyakyusa. "Yes, indeed, that is so: there was a lot of slavery here in Ngonde and very little among the Nyakyusa, because here people were captured in war. From Kyepele, for instance, a great host of slaves was captured and every chief at that time had Bemba slaves.

"And it was the custom for every chief to take a certain proportion of the slaves he had captured and hand them over to the Kyungu." (Why?) "Because they thought that it was his prayers for success that had enabled them to fight so well, to rout the enemy and to capture slaves

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

symbol of potency,[1] and we suggest that this also is an element in the ritual of the 'coming out', for the fertility of the chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the virility of the chief.

There are a number of stories about the way in which Mwakyusa (38) surpassed his brothers and one of them tells how each brother made fire and set alight the pasture land (for traditionally parts of the pasture land were fired each season to provide fresh grass for grazing in the early spring), and the fires started by the elder brothers soon died out, but that started by Mwakyusa 'burned for a whole month'. This is interpreted as an omen of his greatness as a chief: fire, potency, lordship are inextricably linked.

At the 'coming out' all things are made new. No matter how crowded the country the young men must move to new sites and the shelters in which they live must be new, though, as will be shown, they do not necessarily move to *unoccupied* country. On their new site the young men live as bachelors, milking their cows and cooking for themselves on their new fires the meat of the cattle they seize, the bananas and grain brought by their wives and mothers. Meat is abundant, for the young chief now rules and has the right to take what cattle he chooses, even from the villages of the old men in his country. 'It was as if there were war, the young men seized cattle, food, and women', and though they did not fight their fathers directly, as the Meru did, they clearly asserted their power. And, as so common further south, the accession of a chief was the occasion for raiding the neighbours: the young men, we were told, went forthwith to test the efficacy of the magic spears and the medicines with which their chief and headmen had been treated. Or the chiefs might lead a battue to clear the country of wild pig, as Mwakatumbula (Mwambete 162) did directly after his 'coming out'. Well fed and exuberant, the young men dance and display their cattle, and entertain visitors lavishly, for every chief seeks to attract men to his country by his hospitality.

Then they set up the sign and memorial of the chieftainship: they plant cuttings of two species[2] of *ficus*, *indola* which is much used as a shade tree, and *umpandapanda* from which bark-cloth is made. Close to these the first house of the chief and that of his senior village headmen are built, and the trees also mark the

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 124, 143.

[2] When writing *Good Company* I mistakenly thought that two cuttings of the same species were planted. Cf. *Good Company*, p. 27.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

in rulers and is thought to be transferred to them in the medicine brewed out of python blood.

It will be noticed that the central mystery of Lubaga and the sources of the most powerful medicine are the same, and the medicine is akin to witchcraft. The shades, medicines, and witchcraft are distinguished and are thought to operate independently, but they are all manifestations of a mystical power which is logically one, though none of our informants saw it as that.

We referred earlier to the function of the chiefs' medicines in giving courage in war and luck in raiding. Certain emblems of chieftainship are carried in war: a sacred spear, a bamboo trumpet (*ililonge*) or a great war-horn (*ingangabwite*), and several giraffe or zebra tails (*imiswigala*), and all of these have little horns filled with *inyifwila* attached to them. Of the trumpet it was said: 'You hear it and your heart swells and a great trembling comes over you and you fight.' 'The chiefs forbid them to be blown now because their blowing always brings war.' Each of the senior village headmen is given a tail at the 'coming out' and he went into battle with it bound on to his upper arm. A notable warrior was sometimes given one also. To lose a tail in battle was comparable to losing the regimental colours and there are epics of their loss and recovery. If the leader who carried it saw that he was surrounded he would try to pass it back, or he might hide it on the ground:

> then that night they would go back to the spot and they would find it because it shone with a light and made a bubbling noise, *burukut, burukut, burukut*. . . .
>
> In the old days the medicine [in the tails] was frequently renewed; for there was war, and it gave the headmen the power of dreaming of the course of war. . . . But now, since you have brought peace to the land, no one renews it, and it has gone rotten.

However, the tails in Mwaipopo's chiefdom *were* thus treated in December 1937, and we saw it done. The four tails, with six tiny medicine horns and a calabash of medicated ointment, were formally handed over to the care of Kalinga, Mwaipopo's (116) chief wife, having previously been in the care of his mother. Mwaipopo himself was there with two kinsmen and the three commoner priests Kissogota, Njobakosa, and Ngulyo, but not Kasitile (86) since he was 'father-in-law' to Kalinga and could not meet her, though he was informed of the ritual. Kalobo, the second senior wife, looked on. Kalinga poured out the ointment

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

the prospect of their enemies using them. The notion that medicines are a weapon which may be used rightly or wrongly is very clearly brought out in the attitude towards 'making' animals. If a private individual 'makes' lion, or leopard, or crocodile which kill men that is sorcery—there is no question about it—and we heard of at least one man who had been driven from his home because he was reputed to have made leopards which killed children and cattle,[1] but when Mwakyonde 'made' lions which drove off pig and did not attack men, that was a public service (*vide* p. 69). And when one chief uses lions in his conflict with another the action is felt to be comparable with war, rather than murder. In February 1937, four lions were hunting in a piece of bush country near the salt lick, which two chiefs claimed. Mwansumbwe, a chief from the hills, had sent some of his men to clear fields in the bush, but Mwakagile (50, or his heir), the neighbouring chief, objected saying, 'This is my land.' There was a long case and finally the District Officer gave judgement in favour of Mwakagile and refused Mwansumbwe any compensation for his work in clearing the bush. 'You got a crop for your labour,' he said. Mwansumbwe was incensed by the judgement and grew even more angry when his men elected to remain on the land they had cleared and became men of Mwakagile. So, everyone said, Mwansumbwe had sought medicines and created these lions. They killed seven cattle in a few days, attacking even by daylight. 'Yes,' we were told, 'there are always lion in the bush, but they do not ordinarily kill cattle as they have done now.'

Another chief who tried the same sort of thing was not so successful. 'Some time ago the chief Mwakila made elephants, he turned his wives into elephants and they ate the bananas of Malapula, but Malapula said, "Let's try", and he created much rain which poured down on to the elephants and those wives died. Then Mwakila was defeated. How about you Europeans? Have you this custom? Do you turn a wife into an animal?'

'No!'

'We have it, if I choose I give my wife *isigita* and she becomes a lion which roars, it roars and eats people.'[2]

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 124.

[2] This, and the tale of a young man fleeing from justice who obtained a medicine to turn himself into a lion, were the only accounts of lycanthropy we heard—usually the medicines themselves (such as those of a chief) turn into animals, or the young of ordinary lion, leopard, or crocodile 'smell the medicines' and become attached to the 'owner' who feeds and commands them.